Coach teams to pitch day

Mentor briefing and suggested coaching rhythm

Your role

Ask direct questions, share practical experience and leave the team with one clear next step. Teams own their decisions and do the work. Keep team information private, flag conflicts and avoid commitments on behalf of a partner.

Friday | Focus the team

Listen to the initial idea and help the team pick one target customer, one painful problem and a first assumption to test. Suggested output: a one-sentence problem statement and an interview plan.

Saturday | Validate and build

Rotate through customer and business, product and technology, and implementation coaching. Review customer evidence, challenge the Business Model Canvas, scope one demo journey and check commercial and operational risks.

Sunday | Rehearse and sharpen

During office hours and practice pitches, check whether the evidence supports the story. Give one strength, one gap and one next action. Run a timed rehearsal and test the demo fallback.

Suggested 20-minute coaching slot

3 min: hear the team’s goal. 7 min: probe evidence and assumptions. 7 min: decide on a test or pitch improvement. 3 min: agree an owner, deadline and what success looks like.

Before your coaching session

Review the challenge brief and use the worksheets in this pack as conversation guides. The organisers will confirm which applicants you are coaching and when.

Method references: Techstars Startup Weekend organiser guide and Strategyzer Business Model Canvas.

Business Model Canvas

Map one model, then mark what is evidence and what is still an assumption

Customer segments

Who uses it, who pays and who should you start with?

Value propositions

What problem matters and why would they choose this?

Channels

Where will people find, buy or use it?

Customer relationships

How will they start, get help and return?

Revenue streams

Who pays, how much and how often?

Key resources

What people, assets, data or permissions are needed?

Key activities

What must the team do reliably to deliver?

Key partnerships

Who helps deliver this and why would they join?

Cost structure

What does it cost to acquire and serve customers?

Framework by Strategyzer. This worksheet uses original Collab Weekend coaching prompts.

Most important assumption

What would break the model if it proved false? How will you test it today?

Customer discovery

Ask about recent behaviour, record evidence and update your assumptions

Start with actual behaviour

Ask: Tell me about the last time this happened. What did you do? What did it cost you? What did you try before? Use anonymous notes and avoid collecting personal financial or customer records.

Worked example | Everyday Protection

Hypothesis: traders with irregular earnings miss fixed payment dates. Speak to traders about their last missed payment. Look for repeated behaviour before proposing flexibility. Record conflicting examples too.

Customer and problem

Who are you speaking to and what recent behaviour are you testing?

Interview notes

Record what they did, workarounds and pain, using anonymous participant labels.

What changed?

Which assumption became stronger or weaker? What do you still need to learn?

Next test

What would you observe, with whom and by when? What result changes your plan?

Prototype and test plan

Prove one important step before building the full product

Choose a prototype you can finish

Use a paper sketch, clickable mock-up, simple spreadsheet model or scripted demo. Show one task from the customer's starting point to the moment they receive value.

Test the workflow

Give a user a task and observe where they stop or ask for help. Use dummy data. Note what people can do independently and what depends on a partner, permission or live system.

The job and happy path

What is the user trying to do? Sketch three steps from start to outcome.

Smallest prototype

List what you will build, what you will simulate and what you will leave out.

Test and success measure

Who tests it? What task do they try? What behaviour would tell you it works?

Constraints and fixes

List privacy, compliance, accessibility or integration risks. Agree an owner for the next step.

Economics and next test

Check whether the model is viable and propose a credible next step

Do the simplest useful maths

Estimate price, variable cost per customer, acquisition cost and one fixed cost. Show the assumptions behind the numbers. If users and buyers differ, explain what each gets and who pays.

Match the deliverables to the brief

Venture Challenge teams should define a 90-day pilot with an owner and success measure. Idey4u Inside Out teams should show sample creative, budget and a 30-day conversion test. Read the theme brief for assessment criteria.

Price and cost

Price per customer minus variable cost equals contribution. What assumptions move this most?

Route to customers

Pick one channel or partner. What is the cheapest meaningful acquisition test?

Pilot or conversion test

Specify audience, hypothesis, scope, dates, budget and the measure that decides what happens next.

Implementation decision

Name the owner, required approvals and what would trigger a stop, adjustment or next round.

Pitch rehearsal and feedback

Rehearse to the organisers' time limit and leave with a short list of fixes

A useful pitch sequence

Open with the customer and problem. Show what you learned, then demo your proposed solution. Explain the model or campaign journey, the next test and the ask. Name open questions instead of treating assumptions as facts.

Check the room and the story

Time the full run including the demo. Ask someone to restate the idea in one sentence. Rehearse questions on evidence, feasibility and cost. Prepare an offline demo backup and a clear hand-off between speakers.

Evidence to keep

Which result best supports the problem and the proposed solution?

What could be clearer?

Where did the pitch lose you? What question did the evidence leave open?

One change before the pitch

What should change, who owns it and by what time?

Final readiness

Customer evidence, clear demo, credible model, practical next step and a timed rehearsal.